



Traveling Construction Crews Take Advantage of Warm Weather, Wisconsin Consumers

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Contact: Jerad Albracht, 608-224-5007

Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – Wisconsin’s deep freeze has given way to warm, sunny days, and history tells us that this break in the weather will bring traveling construction crews to the state. This year is no exception. Reports of such workers in Wisconsin have already started coming in to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and the agency is asking consumers to be aware of fly-by-night contractors and their questionable claims of quality home repairs.

In mid-May, a hotel in Brookfield contacted police after a group of traveling workers asked for a block of discounted rooms to be paid for in cash. They said they were working on a long-term project with a major retailer in the area – a claim that the hotel found to be false. The group traveled in a fleet of trucks and sports cars and also had a trailer with seal-coating equipment.

“The team of workers who show up unannounced at your door in unmarked vehicles is not your best bet for reliable construction work,” said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection. “These crews have a number of tricks up their sleeves to get their hands on your hard-earned cash.”

Blacktop is big business for traveling work crews, and they often offer consumers a great price to seal-coat driveways based on a story about having leftover materials from a job at a neighbor’s property. They may also offer to do siding, roofing or paint work, particularly after a major storm. A number of outcomes are possible if you agree to their services:

- The contractors may ask you to pay upfront for work that is never completed.
- They may agree to a set price for a job with a homeowner, but continually up the price as the project progresses. If a homeowner protests, a crew member may “cut him a deal” by splitting the difference – but the end price will still be above the original set fee.
- If a project is completed, the quality of the job and the material used is often suspect.
- They may offer you a “free inspection” of your home, but actually plan to steal your valuables.

Consumer Protection offers the following tips if you are visited by traveling contractors:

- Do not answer your door if they knock.
- Do not give into their high-pressure tactics.
- NEVER let them in your home. They are experts at finding and taking valuables.
- Determine the make and model of their vehicles and get license plate numbers. Alert local law enforcement.
- Call the police immediately if they begin a job without your authorization.
- Home repair contractors are required to register with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). Make sure that any contractor you consider hiring shows you their state registration card.

“If you are looking to have work done on your property, the safest way to ensure a quality result is to seek recommendations from family and friends for an established local contractor,” said Chalmers.

“Choosing to do this research can make or break your project and your wallet.”

(MORE)

Contact DATCP if you have questions about contractors – we can tell you if we have received complaints about the business. Find us on the web at datcp.wisconsin.gov, contact us via e-mail at DATCPHotline@wi.gov or call our toll-free hotline at 1-800-422-7128.

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